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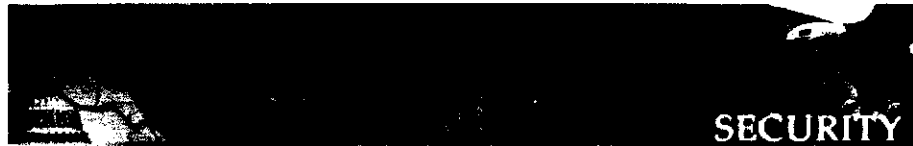
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## The National Strategy for Aviation Security

Full PDF Document  
(150KB)

The security and economic prosperity of the United States depend significantly upon the secure operation of its aviation system and use of the world's airspace by the Nation, its international partners, and legitimate commercial interests. Terrorists, criminals, and hostile nation-states have long viewed aviation as a target for attack and exploitation. The tragic events of September 11, 2001 and the Heathrow plot of August 2006 are telling reminders of the threats facing aviation and the intent and capabilities of adversaries that mean to do harm to the United States and its people.

In June 2006, building upon the Administration's successful efforts since 9/11, the President directed the development of a comprehensive National Strategy for Aviation Security (hereafter referred to as "the Strategy") to protect the Nation and its interests from threats in the Air Domain. The Secretary of Homeland Security, in accordance with National Security Presidential Directive 47/Homeland Security Presidential Directive 16 (NSPD-47/HSPD-16), will coordinate the operational implementation of the Strategy, including the integration and synchronization of related Federal programs and initiatives.

Aviation security is best achieved by integrating public and private aviation security global activities into a coordinated effort to detect, deter, prevent, and defeat threats to the Air Domain, reduce vulnerabilities, and minimize the consequences of, and expedite the recovery from, attacks that might occur. The Strategy aligns Federal government aviation security programs and initiatives into a comprehensive and cohesive national effort involving appropriate Federal, State, local, and tribal governments and the private sector to provide active layered aviation security for, and support defense in-depth of, the United States.

Through a collaborative interagency effort and with input from aviation stakeholders, seven supporting plans will be developed to address the specific threats and challenges identified in NSPD-47/HSPD-16. Although the plans will address different aspects of aviation security, they will be mutually linked and reinforce each other. The supporting plans are:

- Aviation Transportation System Security Plan
- Aviation Operational Threat Response Plan
- Aviation Transportation System Recovery Plan
- Air Domain Surveillance and Intelligence Integration Plan
- International Aviation Threat Reduction Plan
- Domestic Outreach Plan and
- International Outreach Plan

Development of these plans will be guided by the need to revalidate and further enhance current aviation security principles. These plans will be updated on a periodic basis in response to changes in perceived risks to aviation security, the world environment, technology, air transport demands, the global aviation system, and national and homeland security policies. Together, the Strategy and seven supporting plans present a comprehensive national effort to prevent hostile or illegal acts within the Air Domain, promote global economic stability, and protect legitimate aviation activities.

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## Section I - Introduction

*"America historically has relied heavily on two vast oceans and two friendly neighbors for border security, and on the private sector for most forms of domestic transportation security. The increasing mobility and destructive potential of modern terrorism has required the United States to rethink and renovate fundamentally its systems for border and transportation security. Indeed, we must now begin to conceive of border security and transportation security as fully integrated requirements because our domestic transportation systems are inextricably intertwined with the global transport infrastructure. Virtually every community in America is connected to the global transportation network by the seaports, airports, highways, pipelines, railroads, and waterways that move people and goods into, within, and out of the Nation. We must therefore promote the efficient and reliable flow of people, goods, and services across borders, while preventing terrorists from using transportation conveyances or systems to deliver implements of destruction."*

*National Strategy for Homeland Security*

The United States has a vital national interest in protecting its people, infrastructure, and other interests from threats in the Air Domain. The differences between ground-based and airborne aviation security measures implemented in different jurisdictions throughout the world, the volume of domestic and international air traffic, the speed with which events unfold, and the complexity of aviation assets make the Air Domain uniquely susceptible to attack or exploitation by terrorist groups, hostile nation-states, and criminals.

Adversaries have demonstrated the ability and a continuing desire to exploit vulnerabilities and to adapt to changes in aviation security measures by conducting multiple, simultaneous, catastrophic attacks against the United States and its global interests. Exploitation of the Air Domain by terrorists and hostile nation-states using unconventional attack methods is not a recent phenomenon. In the 1970s, overseas militant groups hijacked commercial passenger aircraft as a means of garnering international media attention to further their causes. The rise of Islamic religious extremism and state-sponsored terrorism spawned further attacks against civil aviation, including: the hijacking of Trans World Airlines Flight 847 in 1985; the hijacking of Pan Am Flight 73 in 1986 in Karachi, Pakistan; the destruction of Pan Am Flight 103 over Scotland in 1988; and the downing of a French UTA aircraft over Niger in 1989. The attacks of September 11, 2001, brought the reality of these methods to the United States; the Heathrow plot of August 2006 reminds us of the continuing danger.

Over the past five years, the security of the aviation sector has been significantly strengthened through the efforts of the Federal government working with State, local, and tribal governments, the international community, and the private sector. Together these partners continue to implement a broad range of aviation security measures through innovative initiatives and by leveraging pre-existing capabilities to provide the Nation with an active, layered aviation security, and defense in-depth. Such measures include: a federalized Transportation Security Officer workforce that screens passengers and baggage traveling on passenger aircraft; hardened cockpit doors to prevent unauthorized access to the flight deck; Federal Air Marshals who fly anonymously on commercial passenger aircraft to provide a law enforcement presence; enhanced explosives and threat detection technology deployed in hundreds of airports; airspace and air traffic management security measures; and a cadre of canine explosives detection teams screening baggage, cargo, and increasingly, carry-on items.

Other important security activities include: thousands of pilots who voluntarily participate in the Federal Flight Deck Officer program, which permits trained pilots to carry firearms; flight crew members, including flight attendants who have voluntarily taken the Transportation Security Administration's (TSA) Advanced Flight Crew Self-Defense course; other Federal, State, local, and tribal law enforcement officers who travel armed as part of their normal duties; establishment of a program to collect and analyze suspicious events; efforts to streamline operational coordination on incidents both in the air and on the ground; daily vetting of thousands of crew members and passengers on flights to and from the United States; and improvement of surveillance and intelligence sharing. In addition, the Nation's air defense mission has been transformed by expanding surveillance and air interdiction efforts inward to counter terrorist air threats, as well as by continuing traditional air defense activities against the threats from hostile nation-states.

In today's global and interconnected economy, the safe movement of people and cargo across the open skies is a crucial factor in promoting free trade and advancing prosperity and freedom. Defeating the array of threats to the Air Domain requires a common understanding of, and a coordinated effort for, action on a global scale. Nations have a common interest to protect global air travel. Since all nations benefit from this collective security, the United States must encourage all nations to share the responsibility for maintaining aviation security by countering the threats in this domain.

The Aviation Transportation System comprises a broad spectrum of private and public sector elements, including: aircraft and airport operators; over 19,800 private and public use airports; the aviation sector; and a dynamic system of facilities, equipment, services, and airspace. The Aviation Transportation System continues to grow rapidly, as more and more passengers regularly choose to fly. On a daily basis, thousands of carrier flights arrive, depart, or overfly the continental United States, while each year millions of tons of freight and thousands of tons of mail are transported by air in the United States.

The Nation must be capable of stopping terrorist groups, hostile nation-states, and criminals before they can